

READING FIRST IN MISSOURI: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. What is Reading First?

Reading First is a comprehensive reading program for kindergarten through grade 3 based on scientific research. It requires a core reading program that is aligned with scientific-based reading research (SBRR) and that provides a scope and sequence for explicit and systematic instruction in the five essential components of Reading First. The five essential components are:

- Phonemic awareness
- Phonics
- Vocabulary
- Fluency
- Comprehension

Missouri does not have a list of approved core reading programs. However, a district that is applying for a Reading First grant must analyze its choice using the Consumer's Guide to Evaluating a Core Reading Program. The Consumer's Guide for the chosen program must be submitted with the application. Supplemental materials must be identified to fill any gaps that come to light through the analysis.

Reading First has two additional requirements: (1) classroom-based assessments for screening, diagnostics, progress monitoring, and outcomes; and (2) interventions for students who begin to fall behind their peers so that they will be reading at grade level or above by the end of third grade.

2. Is Missouri moving in a different direction with respect to instruction in reading?

Reading instruction in Missouri is evolving to reflect the National Reading Panel's review of scientifically based reading research. That review indicates that children who are not proficient in reading by the time they leave third grade are less likely to ever read as well as those who are proficient by the end of third grade. Research also indicates the importance of teaching the five essential components listed above in an explicit and systematic way, especially in the primary grades. Interventions for children who begin to fall behind their peers should be provided as part of a comprehensive reading program. Missouri's Reading First requires 90 minutes of uninterrupted reading instruction for grades 1-3. Missouri's Reading First goals are as follows:

- **All children will read at or above grade level by the end of third grade.**

- **The gap will be closed for diverse groups by the end of third grade.**
- **The number of children referred to special education in the primary grades will decrease.**

The intent is that every child and district in Missouri, and especially those that receive Reading First funding, will benefit from the practice of research-based reading instruction as described in the National Reading Panel's report.

3. How does the Missouri Reading Initiative (MRI) fit into Missouri's approved Reading First proposal?

MRI is an established system for providing professional development for improved reading instruction in Missouri. Staff at MRI have spent time and resources to review the National Reading Panel Report and have incorporated the findings into the MRI program of professional development.

MRI staff are receiving the same training as the Reading First staff and remain current with the latest reading research. MRI is prepared to provide supplemental professional development to Reading First schools and to provide professional development to those schools and districts that do not receive Reading First funding. MRI is considering expanding its work into the upper elementary and middle grades. MRI supports the five essential components and works with teachers on the use of assessments for screening, progress monitoring, and outcomes. MRI is a job-embedded, ongoing process of professional development based on the standards of the National Staff Development Council.

4. Can Reading First funds be used to purchase professional development from MRI?

Professional development is a critical part of the Reading First process. Districts that are receiving Reading First funding must participate in all of the professional development that is required by Reading First in Missouri. In addition, districts that receive Reading First funding have a category in their budget that includes professional development for Reading First schools that is in addition to the professional development required by Reading First. A small amount for MRI may be included in that portion of the budget. Schools that are currently in their first or second year of working with MRI may choose to continue working with MRI as a supplemental provider of professional development.

5. How does Reading Recovery TM fit into Missouri's Reading First initiative?

Reading Recovery may not be out of Reading First funds. However, schools that are using Reading Recovery may apply for Reading First funds and Reading Recovery may be implemented as a third tier intervention for first graders and must be done outside of the 90-minute block of instruction in the core reading

curriculum. All supplemental instruction and all interventions, including Reading Recovery, must be based on the skills from the core curriculum that are being taught that day. Reading Recovery will continue to be supported with Title I, state, or local funds. Reading Recovery teachers who are trained in Early Literacy Learning may be included in the 90-minute Reading First instruction as a provider of supplemental instruction for a small group of students. Reading Recovery intervention may begin after the first DIBELS is given.

6. Will the reading professional development currently offered by Regional Professional Development Centers (RPDCs) staff change as a result of Reading First?

The RPDCs will house the Reading First Reading Specialist for every region of the state. These specialists will all be trained in all aspects of Reading First and will provide support and training for the reading coaches and teachers in districts/buildings that receive Reading First funding. They will also provide some training for unfunded schools and districts as time allows. RPDCs may use other reading staff to expand services to middle schools. These staff will also be trained in Reading First so that there will be continuity in the professional development sponsored by DESE.

7. How does Reading First connect with services for students with disabilities and with services for Limited English Proficient (LEP) students?

Students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency are to be totally included in the Reading First program as implemented in each building that receives funding. The special education consultants that are housed at the RPDCs and the instructional specialists that are part of the Migrant/English Language Learners (MELL) program will all serve as resource people to support Reading First schools. These two groups of children are fully included in the goals of Reading First, should be included in core instruction as appropriate, and should receive appropriate intervention as needed.

8. Should Title I be part of Reading First?

Title I reading should be integrated into the comprehensive reading program in Reading First schools. The Title I teacher should be familiar with the core reading program and should provide appropriate interventions for children who qualify for those services. The goal for Title I children is the same as the goal for ALL children. The identification of Title I children in Reading First schools should be very broad so that, on a given day, the children who need intervention may receive it. Caseloads and instructional minute requirements for Title I children are waived in Reading First schools.